

## Today's Sermon

# God's Attributes, Pt. 2: God the Jealous

## Passage

Pastor Corey Millican, GCBC, January 9, 2021

*Exodus 34:14 – “you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”*

### **Intro:**

If you looked up every reference of the word “jealous” as it related to God in the Bible, and they made a movie about it, it’s not a movie that you’d likely let your kids see. It’d be violent, people being hanged and left to bake in the heat of the day. There’d be a plague that wipes out 24,000 Israelites, and a sad and gruesome scene of two adulteress people slaughtered for their sin (Numb. 25).

No one would imagine a jealous God – especially not a God who would *claim* that He IS jealous. The reality is that there are many Gods that we would fabricate in our minds, if inventing God was up to us. Ones that sound nice on a greeting card or that make us feel comfortable. A God of love, mercy, patience, and attributes like that...mostly those that in our self-absorption, we feel we deserve and are due.

But jealousy? That’s far less likely to make the top ten list of anyone’s favorite attributes of God. “God is jealous”, sounds contradictory to “God is love”. And, images of an insecure, abusive husband easily come to mind.

It sounds like we are saying something sinful about God, because we know that the Bible condemns jealousy as evil, and most of our experiences with jealousy in our relationships can lead to destructive anger and rage (Jas. 3:14, 16). We think of the sad jealousy of Rachel and Leah and the unthinkable circumstances of (Gen. 29-30). Just a reading of Genesis 30 reveals that bitterness and sinful jealousy, as well as their deep anguish and sorrow, is preserved (sadly) in the very names of their children. Joseph’s hateful brothers fueled by their jealousy (Gen 36:4-5)<sup>1</sup>. Clearly evil.

Could THIS jealousy then be found in God, who we know is perfectly good (Ps. 34:8; 100:5; Jer 33:11, etc.)? Well, we need to answer that question. Not only is it impossible for sinful man to accept the things that God has revealed about himself (1 Cor. 2:14) – even the most “*acceptable*” traits; his love, mercy, etc. – we cannot even conceive of a God who would be jealous (in any way!) that would be righteous or good. So, what does this mean (and not mean) for God, that he is *jealous*?

This morning we will see 3 vivid pictures of God’s jealousy, that should cause us to love his glory, and live lives that are holy.

To be jealous of someone in a negative sense is to *crave something that someone else possesses*.

But God is not – and cannot – be swayed to evil, sinful, passions like us. Ours if usually destructive:

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<sup>1</sup> “4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more.”

- Proverbs 6:34: “For **jealousy** makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.
- James 3:14; 16: 14 But if you have bitter **jealousy** and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth...16 For where **jealousy** and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

There is, though, a righteous jealousy that burns and desires the glory of God – for his Word, and for His worship. That’s the kind that we want! This is the kind that God has at all times. This is the kind of righteous jealousy that the Psalmist speaks of (Ps. 69:9; 119:139). It’s the same language used of Christ clears the temple with a whip that he made with his own hands (John 2:17).

God’s jealousy could be defined this way: “His limitless, fervent zeal to glorify Himself in the lives of His people.”<sup>2</sup>

I think it’s a helpful definition. And it’s the context of his jealousy – His relationship to his people. God’s aim, in the expression of his jealousy (and all his attributes) is that ***we would know that he is the LORD, and that He would be sanctified (or utmost importance to us) in our lives (Ezek. 39: 25, 27-28).***

Here’s the first vivid picture about our God who is jealous...

### **Vivid Picture #1: a loving husband zealous for his exclusive relationship with his wife**

God does not mince his words. He does not sugar coat anything. He speaks the truth. In Ezekiel we find some of the most gripping and devastating words about God’s jealousy and his people’s sin...

He depicts them as adulterous wives who misplace their love, and give it idols and strong men: this would provoke the jealousy (and even fury) of any husband (or wife), and has. Ezekiel’s vivid images come straight from Exodus and God’s warning to them before they came in to the Land...

He’d warned them over and over all the way back in **Exodus**:

- 20:5 - You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,
- 34:14-16 - (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous** God), 15 lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, 16 and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

God’s jealousy, his limitless zeal to glorify himself in the lives of his people, stems from his covenant keeping love toward us. We are bound to him, as a bride to a loving husband. And, a husband’s exclusive love for his wife, and hers for him, is beautiful! This is not evil, irrational, malicious, bitter envy...this jealousy is

“an “ardent desire to maintain exclusive devotion within a relationship in the face of a challenge to that exclusive devotion.” (Thoennes) Jealousy, as the Bible defines it, does not describe the raging mad, jealous husband, the lunatic who is unjustifiably suspicious and beats his wife as a result. No, jealousy describes something more like the husband who so loves and cares for his wife and is so devoted to the commitment reflected in the promises they made on their wedding day that he seeks to earnestly draw his wife back to himself should she be flirting with adultery. No one would look at that second husband and think he

<sup>2</sup> Beeke, Joel R. . None Else: 31 Meditations on God’s Character and Attributes (p. 110). Reformation Heritage Books.

is crazy for lovingly insisting on marital fidelity, the type that should always be present whenever two individuals have entered into a binding covenant with one another.<sup>3</sup>

“God has a claim on [our] worship and supreme love.” – Beeke.

Application:

- Think of how the Spirit yearns for our friendship/relationship with God and convicts us of compromise: “Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? (James 4:5 ESV).
- What things, habits, or people in your life hinder your friendship with God?

### Vivid Picture #2: a fierce warrior rushing in to battle

Isaiah 42:14 says,

- “The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his **jealousy** (“zeal); he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.”

This is a military picture that we find over and over in the Scriptures, and is a picture of the LORD triumphing over his foes...

Isaiah 59:17 says,

- He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in **jealousy** as a cloak.

God’s jealousy for his glory and for his people and against his enemies who seek praise and glory for themselves is untiring.

### Vivid Picture #3: a consuming fire

When I was in elementary, I was jealous for my friends Nike basketball shoes. My parents had 5 boys to buy shoes for, and so we shopped at Payless for shoes that *looked like* Nikes (kind of). And I craved after something that someone else possessed. Maybe you have had that experience.

But, another way of thinking about Jealousy is to think of it in terms of honor – I may not be able to have something, but I sure deserve it. I deserve that attention; that honor. Maybe I didn’t get recognized as the best basketball player in the school, but I KNOW I’m better than THAT guy. It is about seeking honor. Praise. Worship – for me.

What if you were to replace “jealous” with “Give me that glory”. It makes us sound pretty nasty. But that is exactly what we want. It is this response that shows us that we do not understand honor. We want it for *ourselves*, we are jealous for *ourselves*. And that is the exact response in us that God despises, yet **in Him it is perfection**. For God, “*whose names is Jealous*” (Exodus 34:14) to be the Jealous God is to say this: what God loves most is worship for Himself (and everything He does, He does to bring Himself glory).

<sup>3</sup> Barrett, Matthew. None Greater (p. 234). Baker Publishing Group.

Fire, like these desires, consume us. What consumes you? This is the fire of God's jealousy. God's jealousy even engaged his wrath to consume his enemies.

- Deut. 4:24 - "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, even a **jealous** God"

But, as Joel Beeke says, "

"...divine jealousy also manifests itself in God's zeal for the salvation of His people (Isa. 59:17). "The zeal of the LORD of hosts" guarantees their deliverance and enjoyment of the everlasting kingdom (2 Kings 19:31; Isa. 9:7; 37:32). God has willed to exercise His jealousy for His holy name in the manifestation of His glory in Christ, with the destruction of His enemies and the redemption of a people who will return His zealous love for them with a love of all-consuming zeal (Titus 2:13–14)." (Beeke)

**Application:** (once again, Beeke is so helpful here – let's consider)<sup>4</sup>

**“First, we must repent of ungodly desires and pursuits. James points out a problem that can affect any church: pursuits. James points out a problem that can affect any church: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (v. 1). Churches and families have been destroyed by unchecked lusts and the sins that find fertile soil in them: infighting, covetousness, and friendship with the world (vv. 3–4). Then, driven by the intensity of God’s holy, burning jealousy over His people, comes the charge, “ye adulterers and adulteresses” (v. 4). James then asks, “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” (v. 5, NKJV).**

Brothers and sisters, this is a forceful wake-up call heated with God's holy jealousy that calls us to turn away from the heart-corruptions of worldliness and turn to God in love. The Spirit who yearns for our friendship with God will convict us of compromise.

**“Second, we must pursue holiness and humility.** James gives a positive directive that is coupled with the call to repent from worldliness: “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).”

Are we proud? Are we turning to hum in humility? Do we realizing the intensity of God's holy jealousy over our worship, our affections, our choices, and decisions.

“Let us in humility turn to God for the grace we need to pursue holiness and the love of God more consistently and intentionally. A humble plea for grace is not passive, but active: we must submit to God, resist the devil, “draw nigh to God,” cleanse our hands, be afflicted, mourn, and weep (vv. 7–8). The encouragement of a promise spurs us on: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (v. 10).”

**“Third, we must strive for unity with fellow believers.”** In the context of James's wake-up call to humble repentance in view of God's jealousy, there are “wars and fightings among you” and believers “that speak evil of his brother, and judge his brother” (vv. 1, 11).”

Do we give the world reason to criticize and condemn the church because of disunity and severed an broken relationships demonstrated in how we speak about and to one another?

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<sup>4</sup> Beeke, Joel R. . None Else

Beeke says, that “God’s burning jealousy is kindled against us not only when we fail to love Him, but also when we mistreat and fail to love one another because of our worldly desires.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Closing**

God is committed to His worship, His honor...His glory! And that is good news for us! That is why He saves sinners! Because it brings Him glory! Salvation means worship. We aren’t just filling up God’s worship cup...he doesn’t need us! He would be just as happy without us! But, it please God to have us here...to see Him for who He is. To treasure Him. To recognize our need for this perfectly Jealous God, confess our need for Him, confess our sins, and turn to Him.

### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, as we meditate on what the Bible says about Your holy jealousy to glorify Yourself in the lives of Your people, we ask for humble and contrite hearts. Move us from man-centered ways of thinking and feeling to have God-centered hearts that considers our greatest joy and goal to be Your glory. Help us to abandon all idols, to have no other gods before You. Turn to us and be gracious to us. Lead us now in

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<sup>5</sup> Beeke, Joel R. . None Else, p. 112.